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The first paper of the convention was then presented.

1. "Methods of studying English masterpieces." By Professor J. Scott Clark, of the Northwestern University.

Assuming the practical value of studying masterpieces as an aid in acquiring the art of English Composition, we ask first, what methods of study are or have been in use, and what are their fruits? The objection to the method that has been most widely used lies in the fact that it is not really a study of the masterpiece but merely a study of what some one has written *about* the masterpiece. It consists in cramming the pupil's mind with minute biographical data and the abstractions of criticism—often quite meaningless to the pupil in the absence of illustrative quotations. This method was formerly followed in studying the physical sciences. The student did not study oxygen, or electricity, or protoplasm. He studied what some one had written about the elements, and, if fortunate, saw the instructor manipulate the elements at a safe distance. This method, though utterly fruitless, is still widely followed in teaching English Literature. The second method, and the one now prevalent in most of our leading schools and colleges may be defined as the use of annotated editions. It is what Prof. Genung calls "disciplinary reading," and it is supposed to aid the pupil to invent. But it may fairly be doubted whether what the rhetoricians call "invention" ever is or can be taught in the class-room. The influences that develop invention are too subtle and universal ever to be catalogued or made available on demand. During the last twenty years this country has been flooded with these annotated editions. The fact that hundreds of newly-fledged Doctors of Philosophy have found in the preparation of such editions a convenient means of exhibiting to the educational world evidences of their newly-found learning, has caused the supply to be excessive. Moreover, the temptation to lug in all sorts of irrelevant matter into the "notes" has been irresistible. The universe has been ransacked by these industrious young editors to find anything having even the remotest reference to the subject matter. These "notes" consist mainly of the exposition of historical, geographical, or literary references, the definition of words used in the text, and the quotation of parallel passages from other eminent authors. To these are added ingenious surmises as to the probable reason of the author under consideration for using the existing verbal forms or as to the way in which the author's thought was probably suggested,—ingenious and often interesting surmises; but one may fairly ask, what has all this to do with that development of the pupil's vocabulary and style that he ought to obtain from the study of a masterpiece? At least two-thirds of these notes are really crutches, doing for the pupil what he ought early to have acquired the habit of doing for himself. So, while we admit that the use of annotated editions has some value, we must reject it as almost entirely fruitless in the direction most desired.

Before suggesting a more fruitful method, let us ask what results a student ought fairly to expect and to obtain from the study of a masterpiece. First, he should enlarge his own vocabulary. The number of words used even by "educated" men is astonishingly small. Second, he should gain by his study increased accuracy and delicacy in the use of words. Third, he should gain, by direct observation, a conception of the value of an Anglo-Saxon diction stronger than he can ever obtain from mere statistics. He should observe the effect of Latinizing the diction of a fine passage. Fourth, the young writer should obtain from his study of a masterpiece an enlarged conception of the value of idiomatic diction, observing the effect of substituting more formal expressions for idioms. Fifth, he should gain, by direct observation, a keen appreciation of the value of rhetorical imagery when wisely used. He must note the flavor given to a masterpiece by the prevalence, the sparsity or the peculiar use of rhetorical figures, testing by reducing figurative to bald expression and the reverse. Sixth, he should learn, by direct observation, the relative values of loose and periodic structure. Seventh, he should discover the peculiar value of epigram, balance, and point, noting carefully the dangers and the limitations of this quality of style. Eighth, the student should learn from his use of a masterpiece the value of smoothness—unity, that essential element of any good style, which the young writer is always so very slow to acquire. Ninth, he must learn, by direct observation, the value of simplicity in both diction and construction. Tenth, he must discover something of the nature of that subtle, almost indefinable quality that we call rhythm—that element that forms so large a part in all true eloquence. Finally, above and beyond these, which may be called the mechanics of style, the pupil must discover the soul of the master-writer in his pages. It is doubtful whether the teacher of criticism has ever been furnished with a better text for his work than the one given by that prince of critics, Leslie Stephen, when he says: "The whole art of criticism consists in learning to know the human being who is partially revealed to us in his written and spoken words." A consensus of the best critical opinion assigns at least twenty-six prose writers and at least twenty poets to the first rank in English and American literature. If the student have studied the works of these writers after a wise method, he should be able to determine any one of them by the style alone. That such a test is not impossible, the writer of this paper has proved with his own classes for years. Taking from the authors studied during a given term several paragraphs so selected as to give no hint of their authorship through the subject matter, seventy-five per cent. of an ordinary class of college Juniors will recognize every author, and will give clear reasons for the recognition in every case. The method proposed for attaining the results already named is, in briefest outline, as follows:

Let every member of a class be provided with a syllabus carefully defining the ten general points, *i. e.*, rare words, accurate use, Anglo-Saxon diction, idiom, imagery, suspense, point, unity, simplicity, and rhythm, and

defining also the distinguishing characteristics of every author to be studied. Let the pupil be provided also with at least forty pages of some work of the author under consideration, varying the sections assigned to the several members of a class so far as possible. This, which is really laboratory material, may be obtained in fairly satisfactory shape in the various very cheap editions of standard authors such as those of Cassell, Maynard, and others. A more satisfactory plan of providing laboratory material is to buy the works of all authors to be studied in sufficient quantity to allow at least forty pages to every pupil, and then to cut these books into sections and rebind the sections in groups containing one section from every author. The pupil prepares a written report for the class-room according to the following directions:—

Read your section carefully and note every word not in common conversational use. Copy on your report at least ten of these rare words, selecting such as do not already belong to your own vocabulary. Note also all cases of especial accuracy or delicacy in the use of words, and copy in your report the best five cases. Determine, approximately, the percentage of Anglo-Saxon words used by the author by counting the entire number of words on any full page, then counting on the same page the number of obviously non-classical words, taking the first sum for a numerator and the second for a denominator, and reducing the fraction thus obtained to decimal form. Note every clear case of idiom, and copy in your report the best five cases. Note every case of point, suspense, unity, simplicity, chaste imagery, and rhythm, and index, in your class report, the pages and lines containing the best five cases of each. Now review your section, and discover the best illustrations of each of the author's distinguishing characteristics, and index in your class report the pages and lines where such illustrations are found. Every one of the illustrations of both general and particular points is to be recorded or indexed after a consecutive number. Finally, observe and copy in your class report the best short quotable passages or expressions to be found in your section. This amount of work will be found equal to a requirement of two or three recitations by an ordinary college class. Of course, the number of illustrations called for is arbitrary and the amount of time devoted to a given author may be widely varied according to circumstances. Ten years of continuous use of the method in the writer's class-room have proved that it does secure in a fair degree the results named above as desirable, while it accomplishes a still more valuable result in that it develops an appetite for the best literature and the habit of reading intelligently and critically in the best sense of the term *critical*.

The discussion of this paper was contributed by Professors J. D. Bruner, A. H. Tolman, S. W. Cutting, J. S. Nollen.

Before adjourning the Secretary made some announcements concerning the sessions of the following day. The members

then attended an informal reception tendered them by the University Guild.

## SECOND SESSION, DECEMBER 31.

The Second Session was called to order by President W. H. Carruth, in the Assembly Hall of the Library Building, at 9.15 a. m.

The Secretary presented his annual report:

The Secretary of the Central Division of the Modern Language Association of America, begs to submit as the main part of his annual report the printed Proceedings of the last Annual Meeting, contained in Vol. XII of the *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, pp. XLV-LXIV. Special attention is called again to the statements made therein concerning membership in the Central Division.

The following members have been added to the list of membership during the past year:

Professor C. W. Benton, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minn.  
 Miss Thekla Bernays, 3623 Laclede Ave., St. Louis, Mo.  
 Miss Clara Conklin, Professor, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Neb.  
 Professor J. Scott Clark, Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill.  
 Miss Marie Dehnst, Monticello Seminary, Godfrey, Ill.  
 Mrs. Abbie F. Eaton, 338 57th St., Chicago, Ill.  
 Mrs. M. Eliel, Hyde Park High School, Chicago, Ill.  
 Professor B. F. Hoffman, University of Missouri, Columbia, Mo.  
 Miss Sarah D. Hutchinson, Iowa City, Ia.  
 Professor Albert E. Jack, Lake Forest University, Lake Forest, Ill.  
 Mr. C. H. Kamman, Peoria High School, Peoria, Ill.  
 Mr. F. J. Lange, Elgin High School, Elgin, Ill.  
 Professor Alexis F. Lange, University of California, Berkeley, Cal.  
 Miss Mary W. Mills, Webster Groves, Mo.  
 Mr. E. P. Morton, Instructor, Univ. of Indiana, Bloomington, Ind.  
 Mr. J. S. Snoddy, Instructor, Univ. of Nebraska, Lincoln, Neb.  
 Mr. E. Villavoso, Ball High School, Galveston, Tex.  
 Mrs. S. Wallis, Jefferson High School, Chicago, Ill.  
 Professor G. A. Wauchope, University of Iowa, Iowa City, Ia.  
 Mrs. M. J. C. Wilkin, Ass't Professor, Univ. of Minn., Minneapolis, Minn.

It is gratifying to see that from five of the leading Institutions of the West and the South, invitations have been extended to the Central Division for the meeting of the coming year, viz.: Vanderbilt University, Leland

Stanford Jr. University, Tulane University, and the State Universities of Wisconsin and Illinois.

The Secretary wishes to make public acknowledgment of the friendly coöperation of the officers of the Modern Language Association, whose services have contributed much to promote a healthy growth of the Central Division, and to reduce the burden of official correspondence.

The following report for the year 1897 was submitted by the Treasurer of the Central Division :

Report of the Treasurer of the Central Division of the Modern Language Association for the year 1897 :

#### RECEIPTS.

Balance on hand, transferred by Prof. J. P. Fruit, . . .	\$27 90
Twenty-six membership fees, . . . . .	78 00
From the Treasurer of the M. L. A., . . . . .	42 00
	<hr/>
Total receipts for the year, . . . . .	\$147 90

#### EXPENDITURES.

Printing of Programmes, . . . . .	\$33 00
Stationery, telegrams, . . . . .	5 90
Stamps, . . . . .	16 00
Paid to the Treasurer of the M. L. A.,	
March 4, . . . . .	63 85
" 10, . . . . .	5 15
June 3, . . . . .	15 00
Dec. 6, . . . . .	9 00
	<hr/>
Total expenditures for the year, . . . . .	\$147 90

Respectfully submitted,

H. SCHMIDT-WARTENBERG,  
*Treasurer.*

The report was accepted. The President appointed Dr. P. O. Kern and Mr. F. J. Lange as a committee to audit the above report.

Professor S. W. Cutting, chairman of the Committee on Entrance Requirements in Modern Languages, reported progress of the work undertaken by the Modern Language Asso-

ciation. The Secretary of the Phonetic Section of the Modern Language Association, Professor G. Hempl, read his annual report which was presented also at the Eastern Meeting. Both these reports were accepted.

Dr. de Poyen-Bellisle discussed some questions pertaining to the management of the Central Division. At the suggestion of the presiding officer the speaker formulated his request in the following two recommendations: (1) that the Executive Committee be chosen from the three departments, viz., the English, the Romanic, and the Germanic; and (2) that the secretaryship rotate among these departments. As the discussion following, in which Professors A. H. Tolman, Henry Cohn, C. W. Pearson (Beloit College), J. D. Bruner, G. Hempl, W. H. Carruth and the Secretary participated, showed the probability of a negative vote, no motion was made.

The President requested the Association to appoint the Committee to nominate officers. Professor L. A. Rhoades made the motion that the following constitute such a Committee: Professors J. D. Bruner, G. Hempl, and W. H. Carruth; this motion was carried.

It was moved that the chair appoint a Committee on Place of Meeting. The Chairman invited the second Vice-President, Professor C. W. Benton, to occupy the chair. Professor W. H. Carruth then expressed himself as to the desirability of joint action with other societies in the West, in order to secure reduced railroad rates. The Secretary commented on the very small number of such associations, one of them being strictly local. Professor W. H. Carruth moved that the Committee on Place of Meeting constitute part of a general committee to be made up of different societies of similar character. Professor F. A. Blackburn moved that the question of place and time be referred to the Executive Committee; this motion was adopted. On motion of Professor W. H. Carruth the Secretary was directed to notify the Associations of our desire to co-operate with them.

Professor J. D. Bruner then spoke advising a joint meeting with the Modern Language Association, in the near future. Professor S. W. Cutting and Professor J. S. Nollen also expressed themselves in favor of it. No action was taken.

The reading of papers was then taken up.

2. "Thomas Murner's prose writings of the year 1520." By Professor Ernst Voss, of the University of Wisconsin.

The paper, which was discussed by Professor S. W. Cutting, will be printed in the *Journal of Germanic Philology*.

3. "The autobiographical elements in William Langland's *Piers the Plowman*." By Professor Albert E. Jack, of Lake Forest University.

Remarks were offered by Professors F. A. Blackburn, and C. W. Pearson (Northwestern University).

That the poem is autobiographical has been the unanimous opinion of English scholars, only two, Wright and Morley, have dissented on two or three minor details. However, there are many plausible reasons for thinking that the traditional view of the poem on this point is quite incorrect. The dreams cannot certainly be thought of as real, and very probably also the wanderings are but a part of the conventional framework of the poem. Nor must we think of the poet as an idle fellow, sometimes begging and sometimes singing masses for hire, as he makes his William do; for in that case he practised those very things against which he uttered his severest denunciation. Nor can we be certain of his wife's name, his residence, occupation, age, and other minor personal details. The poem probably gives the spiritual life of its author, but not his outer life.

4. "On the development of Roots and their meanings." By Professor F. A. Wood, of Cornell College. [Printed in *The American Journal of Philology*, XIX, 40 f.]

### THIRD SESSION.

The President called the meeting to order at 2.30 p. m.

5. "One phase of Keats's treatment of nature." By Mr. Edward P. Morton, of the University of Indiana.

When I speak of Keats's treatment of nature, I do not mean by "nature" what Pope or Dante or Aristotle meant, but use the word always in its